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ABSTRACT

This report provides a brief overview highlighting why policymakers should expand the focus of school reform to encompass a reframing and restructuring of education support programs and services and school-community partnerships. The report also suggests ways to accomplish this. It is time for reform advocates to expand their emphasis on improving instruction and school management to include a comprehensive component for addressing barriers to learning. School reformers like to say that their aim is to ensure that all children succeed, and this third component is the key to making "all" more than the rhetoric of reform. Three appendixes discuss restructuring student support services, school-community partnerships, and rethinking the committee structure of a school board. (Contains 6 figures and 15 references.) (SLD)

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ED 435 768

Center for Mental Health in Schools
Training and Technical Assistance

A Center Report . . .

Expanding Educational Reform to Address Barriers to Learning:

Restructuring Student Support Services and Enhancing School-Community Partnerships

October, 1999

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The center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563 Phone: (310) 825-3634.

Support comes in part from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public health Service, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Office of Adolescent Health.

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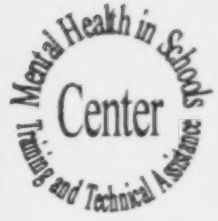

A Center Report . . .

Expanding Educational Reform to Address Barriers to Learning:
Restructuring Student Support Services and
Enhancing School-Community Partnerships

Appendices

A. Why Restructure Student Support Services?

B. School-Community Partnerships

C. Rethinking a School Board's Current Committee Structure

References

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U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Public Health Service
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Introduction

What the best and wisest parent wants for (his/her) own child that must the community want for all its children. Any other idea . . . is narrow and unlovely.
John Dewey

Question: *Do schools need to do more to address barriers to learning so all children succeed?*

Obvious answer: *Yes, BUT . . .*

The *Yes* reflects the fact that schools have long recognized that their mission's success requires that they play a role in dealing with factors that interfere with youngsters' learning and performance.

The *BUTs* are . . . *there's too much to do already and too little to do it with . . . . There's never enough money . . . . There's never enough staff to do what needs to be done, never enough space to house all we might want to do, and never enough time.*

These concerns are all real. AND, schools still must find ways to do more and better in order to enhance educational results. Vision and commitment to new directions is essential. Also essential is using existing school and community resources in better ways.

One major way schools have attempted to play a role in addressing youngsters' problems is through providing education support programs and services. A portion of these commonly are referred to as pupil "support" services and are the province of specialists such as school counselors, psychologist, social workers, school nurses, and others. Others services are offered as part of categorical programs for compensatory and special education and safe and drug free schools and various other specially funded projects. From the perspective of the school's mission, all this activity is necessary because of its potential for enhancing educational results. Another way schools attempt to address barriers to learning and promote healthy development is to connect with community resources. Ultimately, the focus should be on weaving together all school and community resources that are concerned with development and learning.

Question: *Is it worth the effort to pursue the difficulties invovled in doing all this restructuring?*

To do otherwise is to maintain a very unsatisfactory status quo.

The Center has developed policy reports, guidebooks, and other resources on the above matters. The purpose of this report is to provide a brief overview highlighting

- why policy makers should expand the focus of school reform to encompass a reframing and restructuring of education support programs/services and school-community partnerships
- ways to go about doing so.

Ask any teacher: *On most days, how many of your students come to class motivationally ready and able to learn?* We've asked that question in conversations across the country. The consistency of response is surprising. In urban and rural schools serving economically disadvantaged families, teachers tell us they're lucky if 10-15% of their students fall into this group. Suburban public school teachers usually say 75% fit that profile.

In too many schools, the educational mission is thwarted because of many factors that interfere with youngsters' learning and performance (see Figure 1). It is for this reason that schools invest in education support programs and services. Given that the investment is substantial, it is somewhat surprising how little attention educational policymakers and reformers give to rethinking this arena of school activity.

If schools are to ensure that *all* students succeed, designs for reform must reflect the full implications of *all*. Clearly, *all* includes more than students who are motivationally ready and able to profit from "high standards" demands and expectations. It must also include the many who aren't benefitting from instructional reforms because of a host of *external* and *internal* barriers interfering with their development and learning.

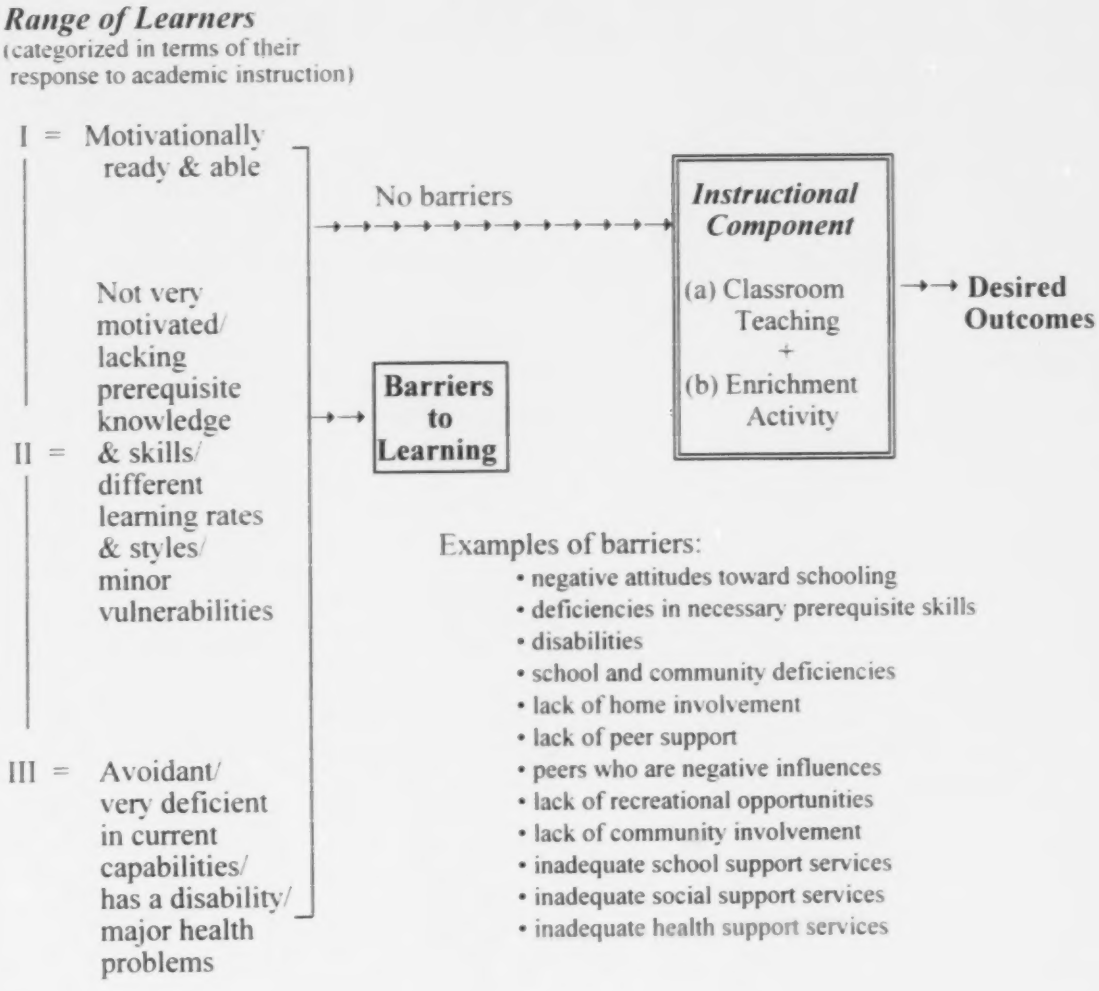
Most learning, behavior, and emotional problems seen in schools are rooted in failure to address external barriers and learner differences in a comprehensive manner. And, the problems are exacerbated as youngsters internalize the frustrations of confronting barriers and experience the debilitating effects of performing poorly at school.

How many are affected? Figures vary. An estimate from the Center for Demographic Policy suggests that 40% of young people are in bad educational shape and therefore will fail to fulfill their promise. The reality for many large urban schools is that well-over 50% of their students manifest significant learning, behavior, and emotional problems. For a large proportion of these youngsters, the problems are rooted in the restricted opportunities and difficult living conditions associated with poverty.

The litany of barriers to learning is all too familiar to anyone who lives or works in communities where families struggle with low income. In such neighborhoods, school and community resources often are insufficient to the task of providing the type of basic (never mind enrichment) opportunities found in higher income communities. The resources also are inadequate for dealing with such threats to well-being and learning as health problems, difficult family circumstances, gangs, violence, and drugs. Inadequate attention to language and cultural considerations and to high rates of student mobility creates additional barriers not only to student learning but to efforts to involve families in youngsters' schooling. Such conditions are breeding grounds for frustration, apathy, alienation, and hopelessness.

It would be a mistake, however, to think only in terms of poverty. As recent widely-reported incidents underscore, violence is a specter hanging over all schools. And, while guns and killings capture media attention, other forms of violence affect and debilitate youngsters at every school. Even though there isn't good data, those who study the many faces of violence tell us that large numbers of students are caught up in cycles where they are the recipient or perpetrator (and sometimes both) of physical and sexual harassment ranging from excessive teasing and bullying to mayhem and major criminal acts.

Figure 1. Barriers to Learning*


Range of Learners
(categorized in terms of their response to academic instruction)
I = Motivationally ready & able
No barriers
Instructional Component
(a) Classroom Teaching
+
(b) Enrichment Activity
Desired Outcomes
Not very motivated/ lacking prerequisite knowledge
II = & skills/ different learning rates & styles/ minor vulnerabilities
Barriers to Learning
III = Avoidant/ very deficient in current capabilities/ has a disability/ major health problems
Examples of barriers:
• negative attitudes toward schooling
• deficiencies in necessary prerequisite skills
• disabilities
• school and community deficiencies
• lack of home involvement
• lack of peer support
• peers who are negative influences
• lack of recreational opportunities
• lack of community involvement
• inadequate school support services
• inadequate social support services
• inadequate health support services

*Although a few youngster start out with internal problems and many others internalize negative experiences, there can be little doubt that external factors are primarily responsible for the majority of learning, behavior, and emotional problems encountered in schools.

What Do Schools Do to Address Barriers to Learning?

School policy makers have a long-history of trying to assist teachers in dealing with problems that interfere with school learning. This includes providing a variety of school-owned counseling, psychological, and social service programs. It also includes enhancing school linkages with community service agencies and other neighborhood resources. Paralleling these efforts is a natural interest in promoting healthy development. Despite all this, it remains the case that too little is being done, and prevailing approaches are poorly conceived.

School-Owned Programs and Services

Almost all schools flirt with some forms of preventive and corrective activity focused on specific types of concerns, such as learning problems, substance abuse, violence, teen pregnancy, school dropouts, delinquency, and so forth. Some programs are provided throughout a school district, others are carried out at or linked to targeted schools. The interventions may be designed to benefit all students in a school, those in specified grades, and/or those identified as having special needs. The activities may be implemented in regular or special education classrooms and may be geared to an entire class, groups, or individuals; or they may be designed as "pull out" programs for designated students. They encompass ecological, curricular, and clinically oriented activities.

Most school-owned programs and services are offered by pupil services personnel. Federal and state mandates and special projects tend to determine how many pupil services professionals are employed. Governance of their daily practices usually is centralized at the school district level. In large districts, counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other specialists may be organized into separate units. Such units straddle regular, special, and compensatory education.

. . . few schools come close to being to do the job that is needed

On paper, it looks like a lot. It is common knowledge, however, that few schools come close to having enough. Most offer only bare essentials. Too many schools can't even meet basic needs. Primary prevention really is only a dream. Analyses of the situation find that programs are planned, implemented, and evaluated in a piecemeal manner. Not only are they carried on in relative isolation of each other, a great deal of the work is oriented to discrete problems and overrelies on specialized services for individuals and small groups. In some schools, a student identified as at risk for grade retention, dropout, and substance abuse may be assigned to three counseling programs operating independently of each other. Such fragmentation not only is costly, it works against good results.

School-Community Collaborations

In recent years, renewed interest in school-community collaborations has included a focus on enhancing health, mental health, and social services for students and their families. State-wide initiatives are being tested across the country. The work has fostered such concepts as *school linked services, coordinated and integrated services, wrap-around services, one-stop shopping, full service schools,* and *community schools.* Where initiatives have incorporated a wellness model, youth development concepts such as *promoting protective factors, asset-building,* and *empowerment* also are in vogue.

Not surprisingly, early findings primarily indicate how hard it is to establish collaborations. Still, a reasonable inference from available data is that school-community partnerships can be successful and cost effective over the long-run. By placing staff at schools, community agencies make access easier for students and families -- especially those who usually are underserved and hard to reach. Such efforts not only provide services, they seem to encourage schools to open their doors in ways that enhance recreational, enrichment, and remedial opportunities and greater family involvement. Analyses of these programs suggest better outcomes are associated with empowering children and families, as well as with having the capability to address diverse constituencies and contexts. Many families using school-based centers become interested in contributing to school and community. They provide social support networks for new students and families, teach each other coping skills, participate in school governance, and help create a psychological sense of community. At the same time, the problem of fragmentation is compounded in many locales as community services are brought to school campuses. This happens because the prevailing approach is to coordinate *community* services and *link* them to schools in ways that *co-locate* rather than integrate them with the ongoing efforts of school staff.

. . . the trend is to co-locate services at a school rather than integrating them with the ongoing efforts of school staff

And Everything is Marginalized!

Policymakers have come to appreciate the relationship between limited intervention efficacy and the widespread tendency for complementary programs to operate in isolation. Limited efficacy does seem inevitable as long as interventions are carried out in a piecemeal fashion. The call for "integrated" services clearly is motivated by a desire to reduce redundancy, waste, and ineffectiveness resulting from fragmentation.

Unfortunately, the focus on fragmentation ignores the overriding problem, namely that all efforts to address barriers to learning and promote healthy development are *marginalized* in policy and practice. Clearly, the majority of school counseling, psychological, and social service programs are viewed as supplementary -- often referred to as support or auxiliary services.

The degree to which marginalization is the case is seen in the lack of attention given such activity in school improvement plans and certification reviews. School policy makers deal with such programs on an ad hoc basis and continue to ignore the need for reform and restructuring in this arena. Community involvement also is a marginal concern at most schools.

In short, policies shaping current agendas for school and community reforms are seriously flawed. Although fragmentation is a significant problem, marginalization is the more fundamental concern. Yet concern about marginalization is not even on the radar screen of most policy makers.

Expanding School Reform

While higher standards and accountability are necessary ingredients in the final recipe for school reform, they are insufficient for turning around most schools that are in trouble. At such schools, overreliance on raising the bar and demands for rapid test score increases may even be counterproductive because they force attention away from addressing the multitude of overlapping factors that interfere with effective learning and teaching.

The present situation is one where, despite awareness of the many barriers to learning, education reformers continue to concentrate *mainly* on improving *instruction* (efforts to directly facilitate learning) and the *management and governance* of schools. Then, in the naive belief that a few health and social services will suffice in addressing barriers to learning, they talk of "integrated health and social services." And, in doing so, more attention has been given to linking sparse community services to school sites than to restructuring school programs and services designed to support and enable learning. The short shrift given to "support" programs and services by school reformers continues to marginalize activity that is essential to improving student achievement.

. . . short shrift is given to student support programs

Ultimately, addressing barriers to development and learning must be approached from a societal perspective and with fundamental systemic reforms. The reforms must lead to development of *a comprehensive, integrated continuum of programs*. Such a continuum must be multifaceted and woven into three overlapping school-community systems: systems of prevention; systems of early intervention to address problems as soon after onset as feasible; and systems of care for those with chronic and severe problems. All of this encompasses an array of programmatic activity that must effectively (a) enhance regular classroom strategies to improve instruction for students with mild-to-moderate behavior and learning problems, (b) assist students and families as they negotiate the many school-related transitions, (c) increase home and community involvement with schools, (d) respond to and prevents crises, and (e) facilitate student and family access to specialized services when necessary. While schools can't do everything needed, they must play a much greater role in developing the programs and systems that are essential if *all* students are to benefit from higher standards and improved instruction.

. . . comprehensive, multifaceted approaches are needed to enable all students to benefit from high standards and improved teaching

Establishment of a comprehensive, integrated approach to address barriers to development and learning effectively requires cohesive policy that facilitates the blending of resources. In schools, this includes restructuring to combine parallel efforts supported by general funds, compensatory and special education entitlements, safe and drug free school grants, and specially funded projects. In communities, the need is for better ways of connecting agency and other resources to each other and to schools. The aim is cohesive and potent school-community partnerships. With proper policy support, a comprehensive approach can be woven into the fabric of every school, and neighboring schools can be linked to share limited resources and achieve economies of scale.

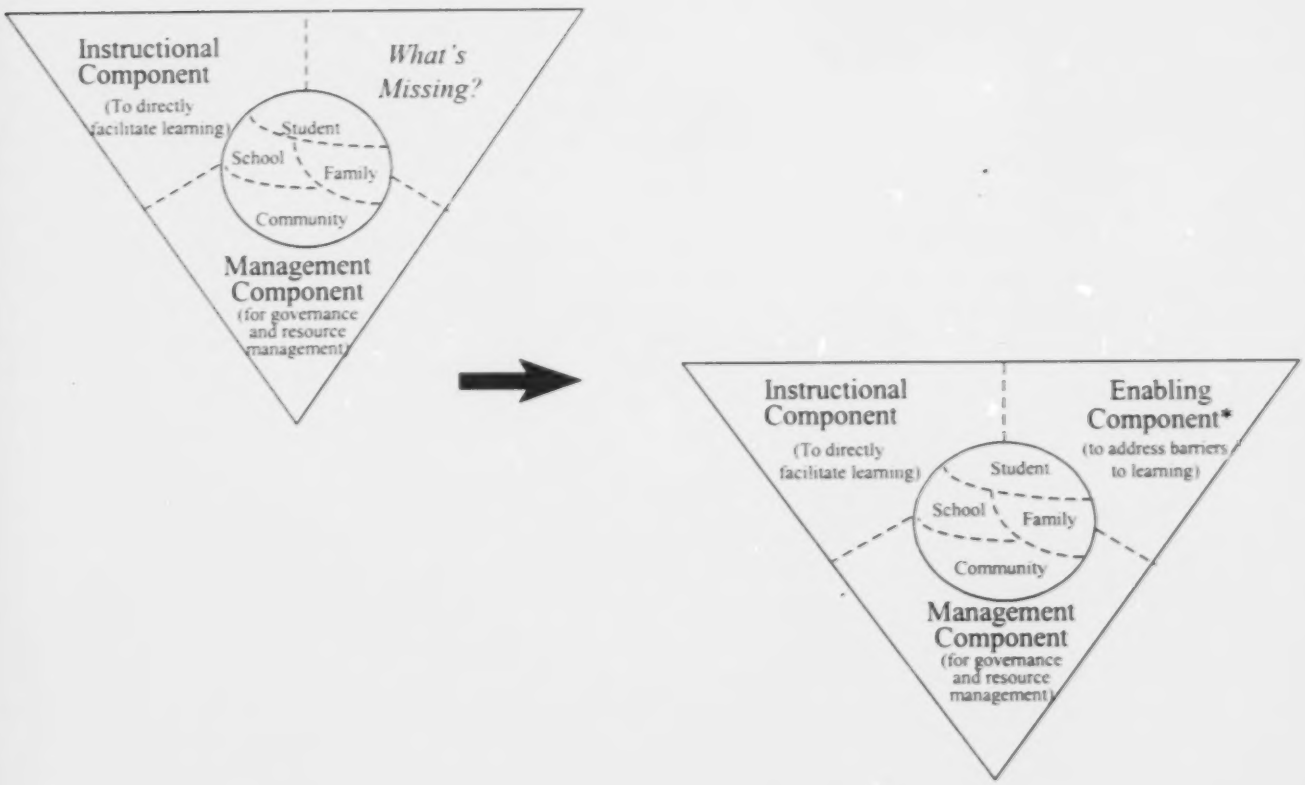
Restructuring Support Services is Key to
Enhancing Educational Results

Policy makers have yet to come to grips with the realities of addressing barriers to learning and teaching. Current initiatives must be rethought, and elevated in policy status so they are on a par with the emphasis on reforming the instructional and management components of schooling. Concentrating on matters such as curriculum and pedagogical reform, standard setting, decentralization, professionalization of teaching, shared decision making, and parent partnerships clearly is necessary but certainly is not sufficient given the nature and scope of barriers that interfere with school learning and performance among a large segment of students. As long as the movement to restructure education primarily emphasizes the instructional and management components, too many students in too many schools will not benefit from the reforms. Thus, the demand for significant improvements in achievement scores will remain unfulfilled.

Clearly, there is a policy void surrounding the topic of restructuring school-operated interventions that address barriers to teaching and learning. Current policy focuses primarily on linking community services to schools and downplays a new role for existing school resources. This perpetuates an orientation that over-emphasizes individually prescribed services and results in fragmented community-school linkages. All this is incompatible with efforts to develop a truly comprehensive, integrated approach to ameliorating problems and enhancing educational results.

It is time for reform advocates to expand their emphasis on improving instruction and school management to include a *comprehensive* component for addressing barriers to learning (see Figure 2). And in doing so, they must pursue this third component with the same level of priority they devote to the other two. That is, such an enabling (or learner support) component must be a primary and essential facet of school reform. This will require shifting policy to push school reform beyond the current tendency to concentrate mainly on instruction and management. School reformers like to say their aim is to ensure *all* children succeed. We think that this third component is the key to making *all* more than the rhetoric of reform.

Figure 2. Moving from a two to a three component model for reform and restructuring



*The third component (an enabling component) is established in policy and practice as primary and essential and is developed into a comprehensive approach by weaving together school and community resources.

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What Are the Benefits of Enhancing the Focus on Addressing Barriers to Learning?

As with all school reform, the first and foremost concern is improving student academic performance and achievement. The reality is that the best instructional reforms cannot produce the desired results for a large number of students as long as schools do not have comprehensive approaches for addressing external and internal barriers to learning and teaching. And, it is evident that schools are not developing such approaches because current policy marginalizes and fragments the emphasis on these matters.

The most fundamental benefits to be accrued from increasing the focus on these concerns are enhanced educational results

Those who already have begun restructuring support services stress that the reforms contribute to

- formulation of a major policy framework and specific recommendations for ways to improve district efforts to address barriers to student learning and enhance healthy development
- ongoing monitoring of and pressure for progress related to district reforms for addressing barriers (e.g., early intervention as a key aspect for dealing with the problems of social promotion, expulsion, dropout, and growing numbers referred for special education)
- provision of a morale-boosting open forum for line staff and community to hear about proposed changes, offer ideas, and raise concerns
- connecting community agency resources to the district and sensitizing agency staff to district concerns in ways that contribute to improved networking among all concerned
- regular access by board members and district staff, *without fees*, to an array of invaluable expertise from the community to explore how the district should handle complex problems arising from health and welfare reforms and the ways schools should provide learning supports
- expanding the informed cadre of influential advocates supporting district reforms

...and there are other benefits as well

Some Models

Several reform initiatives already are exploring the power of moving from a two to a three component framework to ensure barriers to development and learning are addressed appropriately. Such an expanded approach is seen in the exciting work underway in the Memphis City Schools and in the break-the-mold design developed by the New American Schools' Urban Learning Centers (see Figure 3 and Exhibit A). These models provide a blueprint for how schools and communities can collaborate in developing a comprehensive, multifaceted component to address barriers to learning and promote healthy development.

Such pioneering efforts offer new hope to students, parents, and teachers. They can play a major role for society by creating caring and supportive learning environments that maximize achievement and well-being for all youngsters. They can also help strengthen neighborhoods and communities. There can be little doubt that prevailing approaches to school reform are insufficient. The next step must be a total restructuring of all education support programs and services -- including counseling, psychological, social services, special and compensatory education programs, safe and drug free school programs, student assistance programs, transition programs, some health education efforts, and more. To do any less is to maintain a very unsatisfactory status quo.

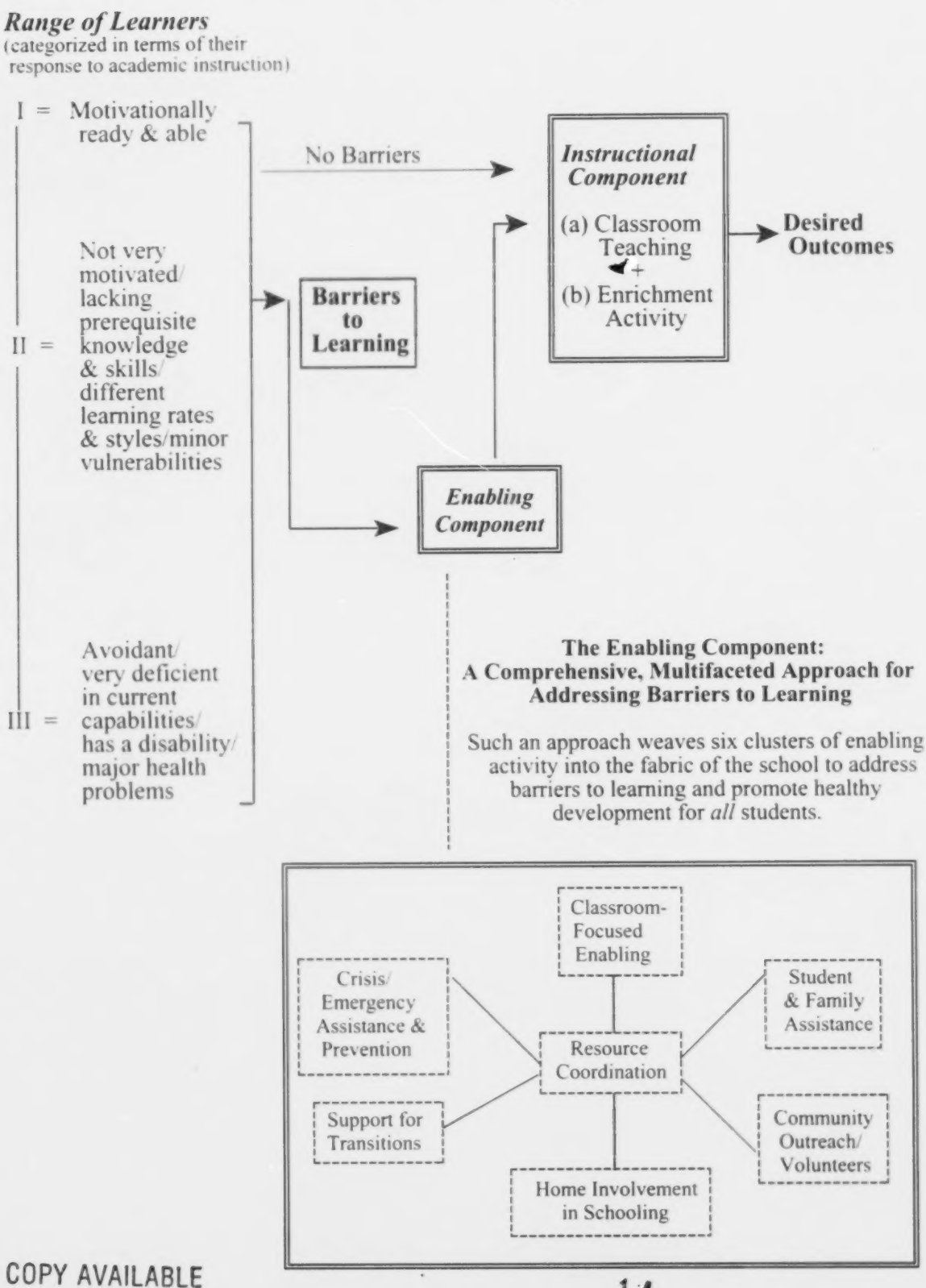
Addressing Barriers *and* Promoting Healthy Development

We hasten to stress that a focus on addressing barriers to development and learning is not at odds with the "paradigm shift" that emphasizes assets, strengths, protective factors, and resilience. The value of promoting healthy development and primary prevention is both evident and in need of continuous advocacy. At the same time, we know that too many youngsters are growing up and going to school in situations that not only do not promote healthy development but are antithetical to the process.

Commitment to enhancing child and youth development and improving instruction can help redress these conditions. But, effective prevention also requires direct and comprehensive action designed to remove or at least minimize the impact of barriers -- hostile environments, individual vulnerabilities, and true disabilities and disorders. Otherwise, such barriers will continue to interfere with youngsters benefiting from programs designed to promote development and provide the best possible instruction

In addressing barriers to learning at schools, much of the intervention focus must be on enhancing the school-wide and classroom environment, and also connecting with the community to prevent problems and enhance every youngster's strengths. At the same time, for the few individuals who need something more, schools and communities, separately and working together, must provide essential supports and assistance. No paradigm shift can afford to ignore these matters or assume that they will be rectified if only schools will make a greater commitment to youth development. It's not a matter of either/or. It's not about a positive vs. a negative emphasis (or excusing or blaming anyone). And, it's not about what's wrong vs. what's right with kids. It is about developing and building on assets, strengths, protective factors, resilience. It also is about continuing to face up to the reality of major extrinsic barriers, as well as problem conditions that are intrinsic to or have become internalized by some youngsters. We all share the responsibility of promoting healthy development *and* addressing barriers.

Figure 3. A model for an enabling component at a school site.


Range of Learners
(categorized in terms of their response to academic instruction)
I = Motivationally ready & able
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III = Avoidant/ very deficient in current capabilities/ has a disability/ major health problems
No Barriers
Barriers to Learning
Instructional Component
(a) Classroom Teaching
+
(b) Enrichment Activity
Desired Outcomes
Enabling Component
The Enabling Component:
A Comprehensive, Multifaceted Approach for Addressing Barriers to Learning
Such an approach weaves six clusters of enabling activity into the fabric of the school to address barriers to learning and promote healthy development for all students.
Classroom-Focused Enabling
Crisis/ Emergency Assistance & Prevention
Student & Family Assistance
Resource Coordination
Support for Transitions
Community Outreach/ Volunteers
Home Involvement in Schooling

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Exhibit A: SCHOOL REFORM EXPANDS IN MEMPHIS

Building on work begun in the Los Angeles Unified School District and developed as part of the New American Schools enterprise, the Memphis City School District this year is undertaking a complete restructuring of its support services. Under the leadership of Superintendent Gerry House, the district has been immersed in school reform since 1992. With good progress made related to instruction and management concerns, the district is expanding its agenda to encompass a third component to address factors interfering with students taking full advantage of academic reforms. This expansion is seen as essential given that the student population is characterized by high levels of poverty and family/community problems. The majority of students are described as experiencing a myriad of social, economic, health, and environmental factors that present barriers to learning. As a result, too many begin school lacking necessary home supports and the emotional, social, and cognitive developmental readiness to take advantage of instructional and curricular improvements. And, with each passing day, too many manifest increasing skill deficits and negative attitudes that worsen their plight.

Recognizing the need to expand school reform, Superintendent House directed Associate Superintendent Barbara Jones and her staff to develop a plan for restructuring the district's Department of Student Programs and Services. The staff met with community representatives to "rethink and reframe how internal and external resources can be restructured to help school sites develop a comprehensive, multifaceted and integrated component for dealing with factors interfering with student achievement." From the process emerged a formal plan entitled *Adding Value, Enhancing Learning*.

The May 1999 draft of the plan indicates that the major systemic changes proposed are built on the premise that, for all children to succeed,

> *... reform efforts must include the following three components: instruction, management, and enabling. Establishment of the enabling component is key to the vision of improved opportunities for students to overcome barriers to learning....*

(cont.)

(Exhibit cont.)

The plan goes on to state:

> *...The need to ensure the success of the district's mission, goals, and on-going reforms makes it imperative that we move expeditiously to start a process of developing such a component at every school. By moving from fragmented and supplementary "support services" to a comprehensive, multifaceted and integrated component for addressing barriers to learning, schools can enhance the impact of instructional reforms and increase student achievement.*

Furthermore, for children to succeed:

- Whole communities must take responsibility for supporting families. School success must become the goal of every social system -- not just of the schools.
- Partnerships among schools, families, and community resources must support the efforts of teachers rather than create a new set of responsibilities and must also strengthen families and neighborhoods.
- Better linkages must be made between schools and all community resources in ways that foster mutual respect, flexibility, family and community focus, and attention to relationships.

The intent in Memphis is to establish an enabling component beginning at the school level, moving up through the district, and outreaching to link with community resources. As outlined in the April plan:

> *Implementation of an enabling component to address barriers to student growth and development requires building an infrastructure which will bring resources to the school to meet the needs identified by the school staff and the community. ... Careful attention has been given to the role shift of central office from that of control to support.*

The overriding aim of the systemic changes is to expedite the goals of school reform -- with the focus being, first and foremost, on fostering academic achievement and success for **ALL** children.

Appendix A

Why Restructure Student Support Resources?*

Ultimately, there must be a focus on restructuring all school and community resources that aim at countering youngsters' learning, behavior, emotional, and health problems. From a practical perspective, restructuring the work of school-owned student support services and programs is the key to enhancing educational results. Therefore, we must begin by building around ideas for enhancing school reform policies and their relationship to initiatives to link community services to school sites.

As currently constituted school-owned support services and services in the community that are linked to schools reflect both strengths and weaknesses. Most school-based and linked services target specific types of problems, such as the need to make schools safe, disciplined, and drug free, the need to do something about youngsters who are failing or who may drop out of school, the need to provide special assistance for students who are diagnosed as exceptional children, the need to reduce teen pregnancy or assist pregnant and parenting minors to complete their education, and on and on. Such services have the potential to make things better for youngsters, their families, schools, neighborhoods, and society in general. However, this potential is undercut by serious shortcomings in prevailing policy and practice related to both arenas of activity.

*As an aid in pursuing such restructuring, the Center has developed a *Policymakers' Guide to Restructuring Student Support Resources to Address Barriers to Learning*. This guidebook is available upon request and for the cost of copying and handling.

To be specific:

Current models can't provide for the many in need

- In current practice, school-owned education supports tend to overemphasize use of individual and small group interventions and underemphasize school-wide approaches and community partner-ships. Thus, specialists only are able to assist a small proportion of the large number of youngsters in poor urban and rural schools who are experiencing barriers to learning.

  With so many youngsters experiencing problems, schools should be adopting new models that use support personnel and resources more effectively. Unfortunately, despite all the emphasis on school reform, this has not happened. Policy and practice related to school owned support services have gone relatively unchanged throughout the recent reform era. This might not be much of a problem if current school reforms effectively addressed barriers to learning and teaching. They do not. School policymakers must quickly move to embrace new school-wide and community-oriented models for dealing with factors that interfere with learning and performance. Then, schools must restructure use of existing education support personnel and resources in ways that ensure the new models are carried out effectively.

Co-located services are sparse and often do not connect with school-owned programs

- Because school-owned support services are unable to meet a school's needs when large numbers of youngsters are not doing well, there has been a tendency for some advocates to espouse school-linked services as a strategy to solve the problem. Co-locating community services on campuses can provide increased access. However, given how sparse such services are in poor communities, it is clear that this approach can benefit only a relatively few youngsters at a few schools.

  Moreover, in co-locating services, community agencies often do not take adequate steps to integrate with existing school programs. This results in a "parallel play" approach to providing services at school sites that generates a new form of intervention fragmentation. Even worse, in the long run the emphasis on school-linked services may reduce the total pool of resources by encouraging use of contracted services *in place of* school-owned services.

Efforts to Address Barriers to Learning are Marginalized

Underlying the shortcomings of current approaches and the problems of service fragmentation and access is an even more fundamental problem: the degree to which efforts to address barriers to learning are *marginalized* in policy and daily practice.

School reform initiatives primarily stress higher standards, higher expectations, assessment, better instruction, waivers, accountability, and no excuses. The irony is that it is widely recognized that these are insufficient considerations when a school has a large number of poorly performing youngsters . Some school reformers, albeit usually in passing, do cite the potential value of integrated health and social services and school-based centers. Nevertheless, in many districts, a school-by-school analysis will show most sites continue to have difficulty assisting more than a relatively small proportion of students. And, little serious attention is given to clarifying what is really necessary for addressing the various external and internal factors responsible for the majority of problems.

Given the marginalized status, it is not surprising that what most schools offer to address barriers to learning are discrete interventions and time-limited "soft" money projects -- often designed to respond to severe problems and crises. Early-after-onset interventions are rare. Prevention remains an unfulfilled dream. What a school needs is a *comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approach for addressing barriers to development, learning, parenting, and teaching.* Yet, almost no thought is given to restructuring current efforts and weaving school- and community-owned resources together to create such an approach. Most "reforms" in this arena do little more than co-locate a few community services at select schools.

As long as efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching are marginalized, reforms to reduce fragmentation and increase access are seriously hampered. Prevailing reforms are likely to produce additional piecemeal approaches, thereby exacerbating the situation. Moreover, the desired impact on learning and performance will not be achieved and desired increases in achievement test score averages will remain elusive.

Needed:
A Policy Framework for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching

The bottom line is that most schools are devoting relatively little serious attention to restructuring their activity for addressing barriers and do not integrate such activity with school reforms. And, this is likely to remain the case as long as new directions for developing improved approaches continue to be a low priority in both policy and practice. A major problem, then, is how to elevate the level of priority policy makers assign to establishing and maintaining comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches to addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development.

Policy must foster a full continuum of integrated systems to enable learning

Related to this problem is the lack of an *explicit policy framework* outlining the nature of comprehensive approaches. Such a framework must be articulated and pursued as a primary and essential component of the reform agenda at the district level and at each school and must be well-integrated with ongoing strategies to improve instruction and management. It is needed to shape development of a continuum of intervention systems focused on individual, family, and environmental barriers. Such a continuum includes systems of prevention, systems of early intervention to address problems as soon after onset as feasible, and systems of care for those with chronic and severe problems. From this perspective, a policy emphasis on developing these systems and implementing them seamlessly is the key not only to unifying fragmented activity, but to using all available resources in the most productive manner.

Policy also must delineate basic areas for developing school-wide approaches for addressing barriers to learning

As should be clear by this point, developing comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches requires *more than* outreach to link with community resources (and certainly more than adopting a school-linked services model), *more than* coordinating school-owned services, *more than* coordinating school services with community services, and *more than* creating Family Resource Centers and Full Service Schools. None of these constitute school-wide approaches, and the growing consensus is that school-wide and, indeed, community-wide approaches are essential.

Unfortunately, when it comes to addressing barriers to learning, schools have no guidelines delineating basic areas around which to develop school and community-wide approaches. Thus, it is not surprising that current reforms are not generating potent, multifaceted, integrated approaches.

Getting From Here to There

Efforts to restructure how schools operate require much more than implementing demonstrations at a few sites. Improved approaches are only as good as a school district's ability to develop and institutionalize them at every school. This process often is called diffusion, replication, roll out, or scale-up.

In pursuing major systemic restructuring, a complex set of interventions is required. These must be guided by a sophisticated scale-up model that addresses substantive organizational changes at multiple levels. A scale-up model is a tool for systemic change. It addresses the question "How do we get from here to there?" Such a model is used to implement a vision of organizational aims and is oriented toward results.

Successful systemic change begins with a model that addresses the complexities of scale-up

The vision for *getting from here to there* requires its own framework of steps, the essence of which involves establishing mechanisms to address key phases, tasks, and processes for systemic change. These include creating an infrastructure and operational mechanisms for

- *creating readiness:* enhancing the climate/culture for change;
- *initial implementation:* adapting and phasing-in a prototype with well-designed guidance and support;
- *institutionalization:* ensuring the infrastructure maintains and enhances productive changes;
- *ongoing evolution*: creative renewal.

Restructuring Support Services from the school outward

The focus is first on what is needed at the school-level . . .

From a decentralized perspective and to maintain the focus on evolving a comprehensive continuum of programs/services at *every school site*, it is a good idea to conceive the process of restructuring from the school outward. That is, first the focus is on school level mechanisms related to the component to address barriers to learning and teaching. Then, based on analyses of what is needed to facilitate and enhance school level efforts, mechanisms are conceived that enable groups or "families" of schools to work together to increase efficiency and effectiveness and achieve economies of scale. Then, system-wide mechanisms can be (re)designed to support what each school and family of schools are trying to develop.

. . . then on what families of schools and system-wide resources can do to support each school's approach for addressing barriers to learning and teaching

An infrastructure of organizational and operational mechan-isms for a school, multiple school sites, and system-wide are required for oversight, leadership, resource development, and ongoing support. Such mechanisms provide ways to (a) arrive at decisions about resource allocation, (b) maximize system-atic and integrated planning, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of enabling activity, (c) outreach to create formal working relationships with community resources to bring some to a school and establish special linkages with others, and (d) upgrade and modernize the component to reflect the best intervention thinking and use of technology. At each system level, these tasks require that staff adopt some new roles and functions and that parents, students, and other representatives from the community enhance their involve-ment. They also call for redeployment of existing resources, as well as finding new ones.

Key steps involved in restructuring and specific mechanisms needed at each level are discussed. At the school level, possible mechanisms include school-based program teams, a site resource coordinating team, a site administrative leader, and a staff lead. For a group of schools working together, the essential mechanism is a multisite resource coordinating council. System-wide the need is for a district leader for the component, a leadership group, and a resource coordinating group. A cadre of "organization facilitators" provide a unique mechanism for facilitating change throughout the system. From a policy perspective, it is recommended that the district's Board establish a standing committee focused specifically on the component to address barriers. Appended discussions expand on key points, and some resource tools also are included to aid those who undertake the reforms.

Awareness of the myriad political and bureaucratic difficulties involved in making major institutional changes, especially with limited financial resources, leads to the caution that the type of large-scale restructuring described is not a straight-forward sequential process. Rather, the changes emerge in overlapping and spiraling phases.

Appendix B

School-Community Partnerships*

Recent years have seen an escalating expansion in school-community linkages. Initiatives are sprouting in a rather dramatic and ad hoc manner.

These efforts could improve schools, strengthen neighborhoods, and lead to a marked reduction in young people's problems. Or, such "collaborations" can end up being another reform effort that promised a lot, did little good, and even did some harm. It is time to document and analyze what has developed and move forward with a renewed sense of purpose and direction.

Why School-Community Partnerships?

Increasingly, it is evident that schools and communities should work closely with each other to meet their mutual goals. Schools find they can provide more support for students, families, and staff when they are an integral and positive part of the community. Reciprocally, agencies can make services more accessible to youth and families by linking with schools, and they can connect better with and have an impact on hard-to-reach clients. The interest in working together is bolstered by concern about widespread fragmentation of school and community interventions. The hope is that by integrating available resources, a significant impact can be made on "at risk" factors. In particular, appropriate and effective collaboration and teaming are seen as key facets of addressing barriers to development, learning, and family self-sufficiency.

Policy makers must realize that, as important as it is to reform and restructure health and human services, such services remain only one facet of a comprehensive, cohesive approach for strengthening families and neighborhoods.

While informal school-community linkages are relatively simple to acquire, establishing major long-term connections is complicated. They require vision, cohesive policy, and basic systemic reform. The difficulties are readily seen in attempts to evolve a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of school-community interventions. Such a comprehensive continuum involves more than con-necting with the community to enhance resources to support instruction, provide mentoring, and improve facilities. It involves more than school-linked, integrated services and activities. It requires weaving school and community resources together in ways that can only be achieved through connections that are formalized and institutionalized, with major responsibilities shared.

*As an aid in pursuing such partnerships, the Center has developed a guidebook entitled; *School-Community Partnerships: A Guide*. This resources is available upon request and for the cost of copying and handling.

What are School-Community Partnerships?

School-community partnerships often are referred to as collaborations. Optimally, such partnerships formally blend together resources of at least one school and sometimes a group of schools or an entire school district with resources in a given neighborhood or the larger community. The intent is to sustain such partnerships over time. The range of entities in a community are not limited to agencies and organization; they encompass people, businesses, community based organizations, postsecondary institutions, religious and civic groups, programs at parks and libraries, and any other facilities that can be used for recreation, learning, enrichment, and support.

School-community partnerships can weave together a critical mass of resources and strategies to enhance caring communities that support all youth and their families and enable success at school and beyond. Strong school-community connections are critical in impoverished communities where schools often are the largest piece of public real estate and also may be the single largest employer. Comprehensive partnerships represent a promising direction for generating essential interventions to address barriers to learning, enhance healthy development, and strengthen families and neighborhoods. Building such partnerships requires an enlightened vision, creative leadership, and new and multifaceted roles for professionals who work in schools and communities, as well as for all who are willing to assume leadership.

In thinking about school-community partnerships, it is essential not to overemphasize the topics of coordinating community services and co-locating services on school sites. Such thinking downplays the need to also restructure the various education support programs and services that schools own and operate. And, it has led some policy makers to the mistaken impression that community resources can effectively meet the needs of schools in addressing barriers to learning. In turn, this has led some legislators to view the linking of community services to schools as a way to free-up the dollars underwriting school-owned services. The reality is that even when one adds together community and school assets, the total set of services in impoverished locales is woefully inadequate. In situation after situation, it has become evident that as soon as the first few sites demonstrating school-community collaboration are in place, community agencies find they have stretched their resources to the limit.

A Growing Movement

Projects across the country demonstrate how schools and communities connect to improve results for youngsters, families, and neighborhoods. Various levels and forms of school-community collaboration are being tested, including state-wide initiatives in California, Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, and Oregon, among others. The aims are to improve coordination and eventually integrate many programs and enhance linkages with school sites. To these ends, projects incorporate as many health, mental health, and social services as feasible into "centers" (including school-based health centers, family and parent centers) established at or near a school. They adopt terms such as school-linked and coordinated services, wrap-around, one-stop shopping, full service schools, systems of care, and community schools. There are projects to (a) improve access to health and social services, (b) expand after school academic, recreation, and enrichment, (c) build systems of care, (d) reduce delinquency, (e) enhance transitions to work/career/post-secondary education, and (f) enhance life in school and community.

Such "experiments" have been prompted by diverse initiatives:

- some are driven by school reform
- some are connected to efforts to reform community health and social service agencies
- some stem from the youth development movement
- a few arise from community development initiatives.

For example, initiatives for school-linked services often mesh with the emerging movement to enhance the infrastructure for youth development. This growing youth development movement encompasses concepts and practices aimed at promoting protective factors, asset-building, wellness, and empowerment. Included are (a) some full service school approaches, (b) efforts to establish "community schools," (c) programs to mobilize community and social capital, and (d) initiatives to build community policies and structures to enhance youth support, safety, recreation, work, service, and enrichment. This focus on community embraces a wide range of stakeholders, including families and community based and linked organizations such as public and private health and human service agencies, schools, businesses, youth and faith organizations, and so forth. In some cases, institutions for postsecondary learning also are involved, but the nature and scope of their participation varies greatly, as does the motivation for the involvement. Youth development initiatives expand intervention efforts beyond services and programs. They encourage a view of schools not only as community centers where families can easily access services, but also as hubs for community-wide learning and activity. Increased federal funding for after school programs at school sites enhances this view by expanding opportunities for recreation, enrichment, academic supports, and child care. Adult education and training at neighborhood school sites also help change the old view that schools close when the youngsters leave. Indeed, the concept of a "second shift" at school sites is beginning to spread in response to community needs.

No complete catalogue of school-community initiatives exists. Examples and analyses suggesting trends are summarized in this document. A reasonable inference from available data is that school-community collaborations can be successful and cost effective over the long-run. They not only improve service access, they encourage schools to open their doors and enhance opportunities for recreation, enrichment, remediation and family involvement. However, initiatives for enhancing school-community collaboration have focused too heavily on integrated school-linked services. In too many instances, school-linked services result only in co-locating agency staff on school campuses. As these activities proceed, a small number of youngsters receive services, but little connection is made with school staff and programs, and thus, the potential impact on academic performance is minimized.

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Recommendations to Enhance School-Community Partnerships

School-community partnerships must not be limited to linking services. Such partnerships must focus on using all resources in the most cost-effective manner to evolve the type of comprehensive, integrated approaches essential for addressing the complex needs of all youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods. This includes a blending of many public and private resources. To these ends, a high priority policy commitment at all levels is required that (a) supports the strategic development of comprehensive approaches by weaving together school and community resources, (b) sustains partnerships, and (c) generates renewal. In communities, the need is for better ways of connecting agency and other resources to each other and to schools. In schools, there is a need for restructuring to combine parallel efforts supported by general funds, compensatory and special education entitlement, safe and drug free school grants, and specially funded projects. In the process, efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved by connecting families of schools, such as high schools and their feeder schools.

School-community partnerships require a cohesive set of policies. Cohesive policy will only emerge if current policies are revisited to reduce redundancy and redeploy school and community resources that are used ineffectively. Policy must

- move existing *governance* toward shared decision making and appropriate degrees of local control and private sector involvement -- a key facet of this is guaranteeing roles and providing incentives, supports, and training for effective involvement of line staff, families, students, and other community members

- create *change teams and change agents* to carry out the daily activities of systemic change related to building essential support and redesigning processes to initiate, establish, and maintain changes over time

- delineate high level *leadership assignments* and underwrite essential *leadership/management training* re. vision for change, how to effect such changes, how to institutionalize the changes, and generate ongoing renewal

- establish institutionalized *mechanisms to manage and enhance resources* for school-community partnerships and related systems (focusing on analyzing, planning, coordinating, integrating, monitoring, evaluating, and strengthening ongoing efforts)

- provide adequate funds for *capacity building* related to both accomplishing desired system changes and enhancing intervention quality over time -- a key facet of this is a major investment in staff recruitment and development using well-designed, and technologically sophisticated strategies for dealing with the problems of frequent turnover and diffusing information updates; another facet is an investment in technical assistance at all levels and for all aspects and stages of the work

- use a sophisticated approach to *accountability* that initially emphasizes data that can help develop effective approaches for collaboration in providing interventions and a results-oriented focus on short-term benchmarks and that evolves into evaluation of long-range indicators of impact. (Here, too, technologically sophisticated and integrated management information systems are essential.)

Such a strengthened policy focus would allow personnel to build the continuum of interventions needed to make a significant impact in addressing the health, learning, and well being of all youngsters through strengthening youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods.

Guidelines and Strategies for Building and Maintaining School-Community Partnerships

Adopting a scale-up model. Establishing effective school-community partnerships involves major systemic restructuring. Moving beyond initial demonstrations requires policies and processes that ensure what often is called diffusion, replication, roll out, or scale-up. Too often, proposed systemic changes are not accompanied with the resources necessary to accomplish essential changes throughout a county or even a school-district. Common deficiencies include inadequate strategies for creating motivational readiness among a critical mass of stakeholders, assignment of change agents with relatively little specific training in facilitating large-scale systemic change, and scheduling unrealistically short time frames for building capacity to accomplish desired institutional changes. The process of scale-up requires its own framework of steps, the essence of which involves establishing mechanisms to address key phases, tasks, and processes for systemic change. These are described in Appendix E of this document. Fourteen steps for moving school-community partnerships from projects to wide-spread practice are outlined.

Building from localities outward. From a decentralized perspective and to maintain the focus on evolving a comprehensive continuum of programs/services that plays out in an effective manner in *every locality,* it is a good idea to conceive the process from localities outward. That is, first the focus is on mechanisms at the school-neighborhood level. Then, based on analyses of what is needed to facilitate and enhance efforts at a locality, mechanisms are conceived that enable several school-neighborhood collaborations to work together to increase efficiency and effectiveness and achieve economies of scale. Then, system-wide mechanisms can be (re)designed to provide support for what each locality is trying to develop.

Building capacity. An infrastructure of organizational and operational mechanisms at all levels are required for oversight, leadership, resource development, and ongoing support. With each of these functions in mind, specific mechanisms and their inter-relationship with each other and with other planning groups are explored. Key mechanisms include change agents, administrative and staff leads, resource-oriented teams and councils, board of education subcommittees, and so forth. The proposed infrastructure provides ways to (a) arrive at decisions about resource allocation, (b) maximize systematic and integrated planning, implementation, main-tenance, and evaluation of enabling activity, (c) outreach to create formal working relationships with community resources to bring some to a school and establish special linkages with others, and (d) upgrade and modernize the component to reflect the best intervention thinking and use of technology. At each level, these tasks require that staff adopt some new roles and functions and that parents, students, and other representatives from the community enhance their involvement. They also call for redeployment of existing resources, as well as finding new ones.

Appendix C

Rethinking a School Board's Current Committee Structure*

Most school boards do not have a standing committee that gives full attention to the problem of how schools address barriers to learning and teaching. This is not to suggest that boards are ignoring such matters. Indeed, items related to these concerns appear regularly on every school board's agenda. The problem is that each item tends to be handled in an ad hoc manner, without sufficient attention to the "Big Picture." One result is that the administrative structure in most districts is not organized in ways that coalesce its various functions (programs, services) for addressing barriers. The piecemeal structure reflects the marginalized status of such functions and both creates and maintains the fragmented policies and practices that characterize efforts to address barriers to student learning.

Analyzing How the Board's Committee Structure Handles Functions Related to Addressing Barriers

Given that every school endeavors to address barriers to learning and teaching, school boards should carefully analyze how their committee structure deals with these functions. Because boards already have a full agenda, such an analysis probably will require use of an ad hoc committee. This committee should be charged with clarifying whether the board's structure, time allotted at meetings, and the way the budget and central administration are organized allow for a thorough and cohesive overview of all functions schools pursue to enable learning and teaching. In carrying out this charge, committee members should consider work done by pupil services staff (e.g., psychologists, counselors, social workers, attendance workers, nurses), compensatory and special education, safe and drug free schools programs, dropout prevention, aspects of school readiness and early intervention, district health and human service activities, initiatives for linking with community services, and more. Most boards will find (1) they don't have a big picture perspective of how all these functions relate to each other, (2) the current board structure and processes for reviewing these functions do not engender a thorough, cohesive approach to policy, and (3) functions related to addressing barriers to learning are distributed among administrative staff in ways that foster fragmentation.

> *If this is the case, the board should consider establishing a standing committee that focuses indepth and consistently on the topic of how schools in the district can enhance their efforts to improve instruction by addressing barriers in more cohesive and effective ways.*

*This is excerpted from a Center policy report entitled: *Restructuring Boards of Education to Enhance a School's Effectiveness in Addressing Barriers to Student Learning*. The report is available upon request and for the cost of copying and handling.

What a Standing Committee Needs to Do

The primary assignment for the committee is to develop a comprehensive policy framework to guide reforms and restructuring so that *every school* can make major improvements in how it addresses barriers interfering with the performance and learning of its students. Developing such a framework requires revisiting existing policy with a view to making it more cohesive and, as gaps are identified, taking steps to fill them.

Mapping

Current policies, practices, and resources must be well-understood. This requires using the lens of addressing barriers to learning to do a complete mapping of all district owned programs, services, personnel, space, material resources, cooperative ventures with community agencies, and so forth. The mapping process should differentiate between (a) regular, long-term programs and short-term projects, (b) those that have the potential to produce major results and those likely to produce superficial outcomes, and (c) those designed to benefit all or most students at every school site and those designed to serve a small segment of the district's students. In looking at income, in-kind contributions, and expenditures, it is essential to distinguish between "hard" and "soft" money (e.g., the general funds budget, categorical and special project funds, other sources that currently or potentially can help underwrite programs). It is also useful to differentiate between long- and short-term soft money. It has been speculated that when the various sources of support are totaled in certain schools as much as 30% of the resources may be going to addressing barriers to learning. Reviewing the budget through this lens is essential in moving beyond speculation about such key matters.

Analysis

Because of the fragmented way policies and practices have been established, there tends to be inefficiency and redundancy, as well as major gaps in efforts to address barriers to learning. Thus, a logical focus for analysis is how to reduce fragmentation and fill gaps in ways that increase effectiveness and efficiency. Another aspect of the analysis involves identifying activities that have little or no effects; these represent resources that can be redeployed to help underwrite the costs of filling major gaps.

Formulation of a policy framework and specific proposals for systemic reforms

A framework offering a picture of the district's total approach for addressing barriers to learning should be formulated to guide long-term strategic planning. A well-developed framework is an essential tool for evaluating all proposals in ways that minimize fragmented and piecemeal approaches. It also provides guidance in outreaching to link with community resources in ways that fill gaps and complement school programs and services. That is, it helps avoid creating a new type of fragmentation by clarifying cohesive ways to weave school and community resources together.

Formulate specific proposals to ensure the success of systemic reforms

The above tasks are not simple ones. And even when they are accomplished, they are insufficient. The committee must also develop policy and restructuring proposals that enable substantive systemic changes. These include essential capacity building strategies (e.g., administrative restructuring, leadership development, budget reorganization, developing stakeholder readiness for changes, well-trained change agents, strategies for dealing with resistance to change, initial and ongoing staff development, monitoring and accountability). To achieve economies of scale, proposals can capitalize on the natural connections between a high school and its feeders (or a "family" of schools). Centralized functions should be redefined and restructured to ensure that central offices/units support what each school and family of schools is trying to accomplish.

Committee Composition

The nature and scope of the work call for a committee that encompasses

- one or more board members who chair the committee (all board members are welcome and specific ones are invited to particular sessions as relevant)
- district administrator(s) in charge of relevant programs (e.g., student support services, Title I, special education)
- several key district staff members who can represent the perspectives of principals, union members, and various other stakeholders
- nondistrict members whose jobs and expertise (e.g., public health, mental health, social services, recreation, juvenile justice, post secondary institutions) make them invaluable contributors to the tasks at hand .

To be more specific:

It helps if more than one board member sits on the committee to minimize proposals being contested as the personal/political agenda of a particular board member.

Critical information about current activity can be readily elicited through the active participation of a district administrator (e.g., a deputy/associate/assistant superintendent) responsible for "student support programs" or other major district's programs that address barriers to learning.

Similarly, a few other district staff usually are needed to clarify how efforts are playing out at schools across the district and to ensure that site administrators, line staff, and union considerations are discussed. Also, consideration should be given to including representatives of district parents and students.

Finally, the board should reach out to include members on the standing committee from outside the district who have special expertise and who represent agencies that are or might become partners with the district in addressing barriers to learning. For example, in the Los Angeles Unified School District, the committee included key professionals from post secondary institutions, county departments for health, and social services, public and private youth development and recreation organizations, and the United Way. The organizations all saw the work as highly related to their mission and were pleased to donate staff time to the committee.

Ensuring the Committee's Efforts Bear Fruit

The committee's efforts will be for naught if the focus of their work is not a regular topic on the board's agenda and a coherent section of the budget. Moreover, the board's commitment must be to addressing barriers to learning in powerful ways that enable teachers to be more effective -- as contrasted to a more limited commitment to providing a few mandated services or simply increasing access to community services through developing coordinated/integrated school-linked services.

Given the nature and scope of necessary changes and the limited resources available, the board probably will have to ask for significant restructuring of the district bureaucracy. (Obviously, the aim is not to create a larger central bureaucracy.) It also must adopt a realistic time frame for fully accomplishing the changes.

Lessons Learned

Based on work in this area, it seems worth underscoring a few key problems that should be anticipated. In doing so, we also suggest some strategies to counter them. Not surprisingly, the problems are rather common ones associated with committee and team endeavors. Since most could be minimized, it is somewhat surprising how often no plans are made to reduce their impact.

Agreement about the committee's goals and timeline

Although a statement of general purpose usually accompanies its creation, such committees tend to flounder after a few meetings if specific steps for getting from here to there are not carefully planned and articulated. In the longer run, the committee is undermined if *realistic* timelines are not attached to expectations regarding task accomplishments.

> Possible strategy: Prior to the first meeting a subgroup could draft a statement of long-term aims, goals for the year, and immediate objectives for the first few meetings. Then, they could delineate steps and timelines for achieving the immediate objectives and goals for the year. This "strategic plan" could then be circulated to members for amendment and ratification.

Agenda setting

Those who set the agenda control what is accomplished. Often such agendas do not reflect a strategic approach for major policy and systemic reforms. The more ambitious the goals, the more difficult it is to work in a systematic manner. Committees have difficulty doing first things first. For example, the first step is to establish a big picture policy framework; then specifics can be fleshed out. In fleshing out specifics, the first emphasis is on restructuring and redeploying poorly used resources; this work provides the context for exploring how to enhance resources.

> Possible strategy: The committee could delegate agenda setting to a small subgroup who are perceived as having a comprehensive understanding of the strategic process necessary for achieving the committee's desired ends.

Keeping on task

It is very easy to bog the committee's work down by introducing distractions and through poor meeting facilitation. Bogging things down can kill members' enthusiasm; conversely, well-run and productive meetings can generate long-term commitment and exceptional participation. Matters that can make the process drag along include the fact that committee members have a great deal to learn before they can contribute effectively. Nondistrict members often require an introductory "course" on schools and school culture. District members usually require a similar introduction to the ABCs of community agencies and resources. Staff asked to describe a program are inclined to make lengthy presentations. Also, there are a variety of immediate concerns that come to the board that fall under the purview and expertise of such a standing committee (e.g., ongoing proposals for programs and resource allocation, sudden crises).

Possible strategy: The key to appropriately balancing demands is careful agenda setting. The key to meetings that effectively move the agenda forward is firm facilitation that is implemented gently, flexibly, and with good humor. This requires assigning meeting facilitation to a committee member with proven facilitation skills or, if necessary, recruiting a non committee member who has such skills.

Working between meetings

When committees meet only once a month or less often, it is unlikely that proposals for major policy and systemic reforms will be forthcoming in a timely and well-formulated manner.

Possible strategy: Subgroups of the committee can be formed to work between meetings. These work groups can accomplish specific tasks and bring the products to the full committee for amendment and ratification. Using such a format, the agenda for scheduled committee meetings can be streamlined to focus on refining work group products and developing guidelines for future work group activity.

Avoiding Fragmentation

As Figure 3 highlights, the functions with which the committee is concerned overlap the work of board committees focusing on instruction and the governance and management of resources. Unless there are effective linkages between committees, fragmentation is inevitable.

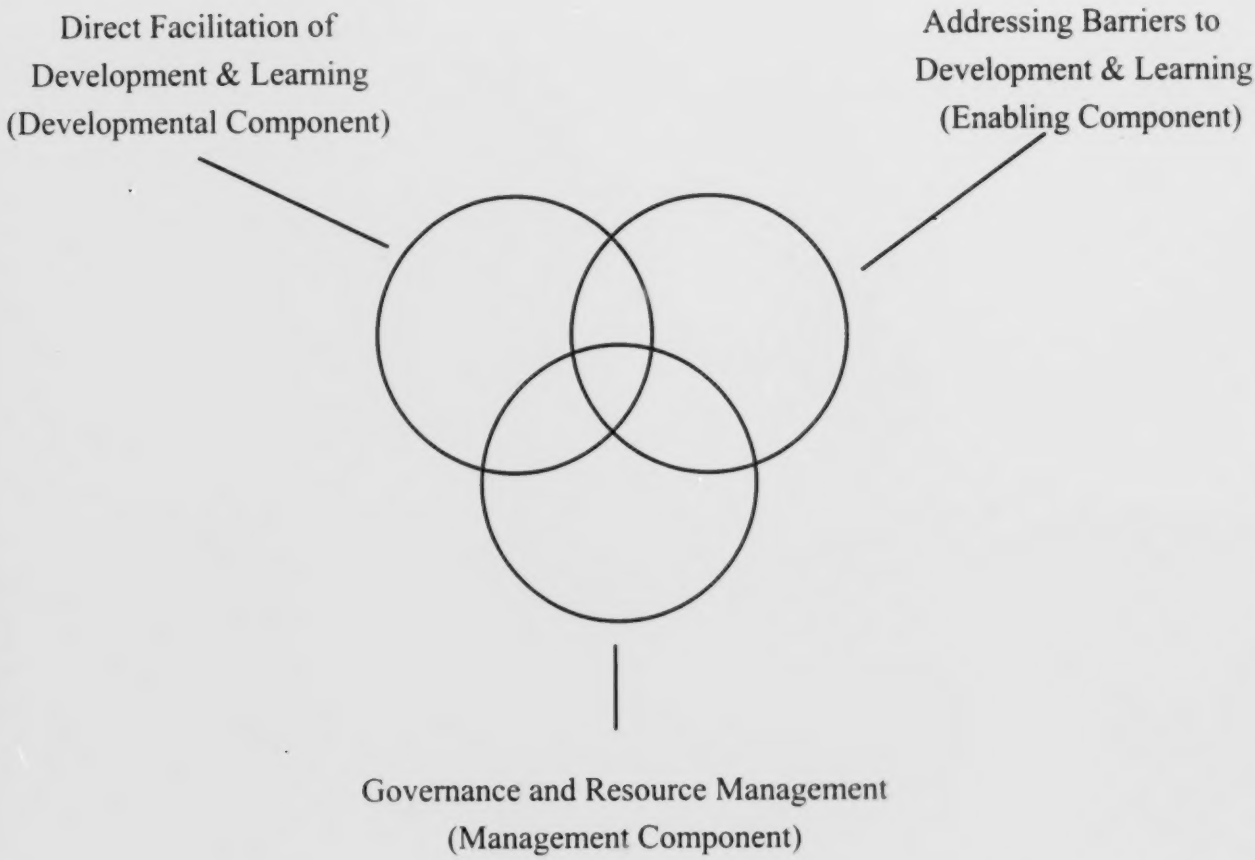
Possible strategy: Circulating all committee agendas and minutes; cross-committee participation or joint meetings when overlapping interests are on the agenda.

Minimizing political and interpersonal machinations

Obviously, school boards are political entities. Therefore, besides common interpersonal conflicts that arise in most groups, differences in ideology and constituent representation can interfere with a committee accomplishing its goals.

> Possible strategy: At the outset, it is wise to identify political and interpersonal factors that might undermine acceptance of the committee's proposals. Then steps can be taken to negotiate agreements with key individuals in order to maximize the possibility that proposals are formulated and evaluated in a nonpartisan manner.

Figure 3. Functional Focus for Reform and Restructuring



Concluding Comments

As school boards strive to improve schools, the primary emphasis is on high standards, high expectations, assessment, accountability, and no excuses. These are all laudable guidelines for reform. They are simply not sufficient.

It is time for school boards to deal more effectively with the reality that, by themselves, the best instructional reforms cannot produce desired results when large numbers of students are not performing well. It is essential to enhance the way every school site addresses barriers to learning and teaching. Each school needs policy support to help evolve a comprehensive, multifaceted, and well-integrated approach for addressing barriers and for doing so in ways that weave the work seamlessly with the school's efforts to enhance instruction and school management.

Progress along these lines is hampered by the marginalized status of programs and personnel whose primary focus is on enabling learning by effectively addressing barriers. Most school boards do not have a standing committee that focuses exclusively on this arena of policy and practice. The absence of such a structural mechanism makes it difficult to focus powerfully and cohesively on improving the way current resources are used and hinders exploring the best ways to evolve the type of comprehensive and multifaceted approaches that are needed to produce major gains in student achievement.

*References to some of our work on the above matters:**

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*For an overview of all resources available from the Center or to request a specific resource, write c/o the Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Box 951563, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563 or call 310/825-3634 or use the internet to scan the website http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

The Co-directors of the School Mental Health Project at UCLA and its Center for Mental Health in Schools are Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor.

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U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Public Health Service
HRSA
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We hope you found this to be a useful resource.
There's more where this came from!

This packet has been specially prepared by our Clearinhouse. Other Introductory Packets and materials are available. Resources in the Clearinghouse are organized around the following categories:

Systemic Concerns

- Policy issues related to mental health in schools
- Mechanisms and procedures for program/service coordination
  - Collaborative Teams
  - School-community service linkages
  - Cross disciplinary training and interprofessional education
- Comprehensive, integrated programmatic approaches (as contrasted with fragmented, categorical, specialist oriented services)
- Issues related to working in rural, urban, and suburban areas
- Restructuring school support service
  - Systemic change strategies
  - Involving stakeholders in decisions
  - Staffing patterns
  - Financing
  - Evaluation, Quality Assurance
  - Legal Issues
- Professional standards

Programs and Process Concerns

- Clustering activities into a cohesive, programmatic approach
  - Support for transitions
  - Mental health education to enhance healthy development & prevent problems
  - Parent/home involvement
  - Enhancing classrooms to reduce referrals (including prereferral interventions)
  - Use of volunteers/trainees
  - Outreach to community
  - Crisis response
  - Crisis and violence prevention (including safe schools)
- Staff capacity building & support
  - Cultural competence
  - Minimizing burnout
- Interventions for student and family assistance
  - Screening/Assessment
  - Enhancing triage & ref. processes
  - Least Intervention Needed
  - Short-term student counseling
  - Family counseling and support
  - Case monitoring/management
  - Confidentiality
  - Record keeping and reporting
  - School-based Clinics

Psychosocial Problems

- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Depression/suicide
- Grief
- Dropout prevention
- Gangs
- School adjustment (including newcomer acculturation)
- Pregnancy prevention/support
- Eating problems (anorexia, bulimia)
- Physical/Sexual Abuse
- Neglect
- Gender and sexuality
- Learning, attention & behavior problems
- Self-esteem
- Relationship problems
- Anxiety
- Disabilities
- Reactions to chronic illness